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COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

PARASITIC JAEGER
Stercorarius parasiticusLocation: Lake Henry; Ordway; Crowley County, ColoradoDate: September 9-10, 1995

On the 9th we saw this bird with about 15 people on a C.F.O. field trip. On the 10th I returned alone to re-observe the bird. On the 9th the conditions were difficult: overcast, wind, intermittent rain. We watched it that day at about 10:00 a.m. for about an hour. Other observers included John Barber, Gary Conover, Brandon Percival, Scott Seltman and Joe Roller. We used a variety of scopes and binoculars and watched the bird at 250-500 yards, both in flight and on the water. On the 10th the conditions were much better. I had sunny and calm conditions. I observed the jaeger on that day for nearly 2 1/2 hours as it flew around the lake and rested on the water. I watched it from about 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. with a Kowa 20-60X scope and B & L Elite 10x40 binoculars. Distances ranged from 200 yards to half a mile. I got several excellent views when the bird landed on the water, facing away from me, and spread the wings full out prior to folding them. This afforded me good views of the color and pattern of the upper wing. I never saw the bird chase any gull, nor was I able to closely compare its size to any gull.

Description:

The bird was a light phase subadult bird. It was a medium-sized, gull-like, or falcon-like bird, about the size of a Ring-billed or California gull. It was dark above and lighter below. The wings were rather narrow-based. There was a slight point or projection to the center of the tail. I couldn't quite see if the center tail feathers were pointed or rounded, but this short extension gave the tail a pointed appearance. The bill was all dark. The color of the uppersides (mantle) was mainly brownish, with a slight grayish tinge. The upper wing had a white flash that was nearly as obvious as the one in the underwing. From above, the secondaries were not darker than the rest of the wing and did not form a dark or blackish terminal border to the wing as in a Long-tailed Jaeger. On the upperwing, the outer 5-7 primaries had white shafts. The underwing was pale with an obvious white flash in the primaries only (not on the coverts). The undersides were pale at a distance, being finely barred brown on white at closer approaches. There was a dark chest band. The rump was barred brown and white, giving the bird a pale-rumped look at a distance. While floating on the water, the bird was primarily a dark brown bird with a much paler nape and darker on the top of the head, nearly forming a blackish cap.

Similar Species:

The large size, dark uppersides, falcon-like flight and white flash in the wing indicate a jaeger. The Long-tailed Jaeger would be smaller, would be mainly grayish (not brownish), would have darker secondaries (forming a blackish trailing edge to the wing), and would have less white in the primaries from above (forming a much reduced white flash from above). The Pomarine Jaeger would be larger, chestier, and have wider-based wings, would have more white in the primaries of the upper wing, would lack the clearly pale nape and would show a two-toned bill.

Experience with Species:

I have seen many jaegers of all three species in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. I have seen all three jaegers in Colorado, including Pomarine Jaegers in 1991 and 1994 (and 1993 in California), Parasitic in 1985 (and 1993 in California), and Long-tailed in 1992 (and 1990 in California).

This report was prepared from notes made during and after observation.



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